Destiny's Food Diaries

Destiny S. Harris

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Intro

When I came up with the original title of this book (Eat that Damn Cracker), I was debating if I should eat some Ritz Crackers. I had recently completed several weeks of clean eating that I decided to do to give my body a break from processed foods (I do these "clean eating intervals" to maintain balance with my eating habits).

Here I am, not overweight, fit and trim, consistently leading an overall healthy lifestyle, yet still debating if I should eat a damn Ritz Cracker. Finally, after about a sixty-minute mental debate (yes...I know), I told myself, “Eat that damn cracker!”

I’ve never been overweight. You can call me lucky or whatever you want, but just because a person is not overweight does not mean they do not share some of the same struggles as

overweight people or even people who struggle with any type of food addiction. After I finally accepted myself as a bona fide foodie, I started to believe that real foodies are not the ones who are simply overweight, but the ones who aren't overweight and *seem* to have a *normal and indifferent* relationship with food.

As far as I can remember, I have never had a *normal* relationship with food. I have often wished I experienced an apathetic attitude towards food--as I often witnessed from other people. I have always thought about food incessantly, participated in cycles of binging, dealt with feelings of guilt in relation to food, snatched other people's food and snacks when they weren't looking (yup, I'm that friend), became flabbergasted when people didn't **finish** good food or snacks, and felt self-conscious when going back for seconds (or thirds, fourths, and fifths) at public events--what can I say: I have a hefty appetite at times.

As time went by though, I have learned to love and accept my adoration for edible delights. I am less ashamed now about my unique food tendencies that differ from others, but this took years to develop. I know the most pertinent reality I came to understand is I can afford "The Ritz Cracker". I do not mean cost wise, but physically. Physical activity has remained a constant staple in my life, and once I became enlightened by this fact, I started to shed the guilt, the awkwardness, and the self-dislike that I often experienced due to my food tendencies.

Foodie

Someone that takes a strong interest in food--this could be an understatement though.

I love being a foodie. I love eating. I love cupcakes. I love snacking. I enjoy cooking (something I never thought I would enjoy until I realized that *cooking gives you the power to control which ingredients you put in your food, which helps one make healthier choices with their food)*. I love watching the Food Network (even though I never cook anything from the show after years of watching it). I love snacks. I LOVE edible things. Eating is one of my favorite hobbies. I believe some people were meant to simply love food. Some utilize this love and become chefs, food critics, food authors, food pioneers, and other food--involved endeavors; others, like me, simply enjoy eating food and that is it.

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There is nothing wrong with being a foodie. In fact, consider it a unique characteristic about yourself to be proud of. The times of holding back our appetites and abating our interests in food are over. Diminishing parts of ourselves only perpetuates guilty and negative feelings anyways, and this is a waste of our valuable time on this earth. Life should be spent living out who we are and enjoying our most genuine characteristics.

Moderation

Hmmmmm....I don't believe in moderation when it comes to food--and many foodies don't. So, let's just skip this chapter.

Flexibility

I cannot even count the number of times where I felt guilty for indulging in food (even when the food was healthy). Where do these feelings of guilt derive from? Do the guilty feelings stem from food addictions that have been consistent throughout family history? Are the guilty feelings due to the enculturation of our societal norms and beliefs? I mean there are many possible reasons, but we weren't born with feelings of guilt; we *acquired* these feelings of guilt. If we *acquired* these guilty feelings and inclinations though, this means we previously made a choice to experience these negative feelings. By making a *new* decision, we can eradicate these feelings altogether.

I learned to give myself room to eat what I want when I want, not all the time, but enough of the time. Life is meant to be enjoyed. Life is not meant to be constrained or limited from

enjoyable experiences. As a foodie, experiencing food is important and enjoyable to me. Hence, *allowing* myself to frequently experience things involving food is something I learned to be *acceptable*.

Give yourself flexibility to enjoy the foods you love in moderation! So often we constrain ourselves and discipline ourselves unnecessarily when we don't need to. It is okay to enjoy life and be happy!

Moderation for Real

Okay, so maybe I was kidding just a little about not believing in moderation. I will admit, sometimes I do not execute my diet in moderation, but this is okay because *I always circle back to finding my definition of balance*. Everyone has a different definition of balance and moderation for their bodies, minds, and souls, and we all must determine what balance means to us individually.

It is important to not let anything in our lives become greater than ourselves. Food is amazing but letting food *control* us is never the right path to follow. Food can be classified as a drug. In fact, it is one of the most common overlooked drugs because people perceive food to be essential to life, but we must not forget that water is more essential than food. Often, people do not find a lot of harm in the over consumption of food, but when we over consume anything, we

become out of balance and initiate a process of losing control over ourselves. Essentially, consistently over consuming food establishes a powerful habit that will eventually deceive us into feeling powerless if we ever try to change the habit.

Some of the most noticeable effects of not eating in moderation on a consistent basis include sickness, lethargy, self-loathing (for some), and guilt. At the same time, sometimes not eating in moderation produces feelings of liberation, happiness, and satisfaction. It is good to experience each of these feelings at some point so you can determine which feelings you want to have more often than others.

Find your definition of moderation when it comes to food and then live it out. I do not always eat clean. Sometimes I go for weeks or months of pure clean eating, and other times I will do weeks of less healthy eating. Furthermore, sometimes I

do a mixture of both clean eating and less clean eating throughout a given week. I always find a medium though between the two. My body functions as my "internal regulator" and lets me know through various ways (e.g. symptoms, feelings, cravings, physical appearance, etc.) when I need to get back on track with clean eating; my body also lets me know when I need to take a break from clean eating. As a foodie, I realize that it is not always such a smart idea to eat whatever I want whenever I want. Everyone is different but eating un-healthy *all* the time makes me feel like shit, and I hate feeling that way. Hence, moderation is something that I am consistently working on and implementing into my life so I may enjoy food, but also life--fully.

Physical Activity

Everyone has a body that functions differently, but if **I** was not consistently engaged in physical activity, then I probably would not get away with eating what I want as often as I do now; being physically active grants me more liberty in how I conduct my diet. I do not engage in physical activity just so I may have more flexibility with my diet though; I engage in physical activity because I enjoy it. Physical activity for me primarily includes weightlifting and walking (which are my favorite types of physical activity). Find what you like to do and stick to that but also feel free to change it up consistently to prevent yourself from boredom. When it comes to physical activity, the most important thing you need to do (aside from being consistent) is ensure that the exercises you engage in are enjoyable for *you;* consistently engaging in activity that is *not* enjoyable only leads to unhappiness. If you do not like biking, then DO NOT go biking! Go run,

walk, dance, swim, or do something else that you find pleasant; it's that simple. **It is a hell of lot to easier to maintain an exercise routine when you *enjoy* it.**

It is essential to take care of your physical body with *both* diet and exercise. As a foodie, I realize it is important to have positive outlets aside from the enjoyment of food to prevent dependence or unnecessary attachment to food; physical activity is one of these positive outlets.

Timing

There are some essential points to live by when it comes to being a bona fide foodie. They are as follows:

1. Never make it a habit to eat due to feelings--which can so often be capricious in nature.

2. The most common feelings that are associated with emotional eating are: boredom, sadness, depression, guilt, loneliness, stress, happiness, and excitement. Furthermore, many people like to eat when they are in a celebratory mood just as much as when they are feeling depressed. Be in tune with yourself enough to realize when you are in these different states and desire to eat.

3. When you are feeling stressed, avoid certain foods that do not mitigate or help eradicate the feeling which include: nuts, sugar, fats, processed foods, and fast foods. The last thing you need to

do is add more stress to your body by consuming foods that will most likely only make you feel worse, put more stress on your body, or be easily over- consumed.

4. It is okay to celebrate with food; I do it! However, food does not **always** have to be a part of a celebration. Find other positive ways to celebrate to avoid an unnecessary attachment to food.

Timing is essential when it comes to consuming food. Many people eat food when they are experiencing certain feelings like the ones I listed above. The best thing to do when you are experiencing a certain feeling is to simply *experience the feeling* without any external distractions. People who have become food addicts and have developed attachments to food usually eat in sync with whatever they are feeling. They do not know how to experience feelings without masking it with something

edible. Consider the timing of when you eat food. Here are some basic questions to get in the habit of asking yourself before you eat:

1. **Am I truly hungry?**

Drink a full glass of water or a cup of tea and see how you feel afterwards. If you are still hungry after 15-60 minutes, then you probably are hungry.

2. **What feeling am I experiencing right now? Is the feeling a positive, negative, or neutral feeling?**

It is a wise practice to consistently stay present with our feelings. Feel what you are feeling for a little while before ingesting any food.

3. **Do I genuinely want to eat this? Will I enjoy myself if I consume this?**

We often eat things that we do not even enjoy (both healthy and unhealthy things). The purpose of life is to enjoy it! If you are trying to eat healthier, then find some vegetables and foods that are actually enjoyable to you--or at the very least, tolerable. Avoid eating foods that make you mentally vomit before even ingesting them. If you are not satisfied with the food, you have been consuming, then try other foods, or learn how to cook foods that are more pleasant to your pallet. We are in ultimate control of what we consume.

Savor

Stay present while you eat.
Avoid multi-tasking while you eat.
Savor the food you eat.
Appreciate the food you eat.
Observe and experience the food you eat.
Taste the food you eat.
Smell the food you eat.
Stay present while you eat.

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The Media Trap

Commercials and media are constantly feeding us images, messages, and rules about food, diet, and our bodies. I think many of us can get so caught up into what society thinks of us and what society says we should do with our lives and our diets; we forget that we are in control and have the power to make our own decisions about what we do with our bodies.

There are numerous food ads, food labels, and messages that are worded exactly as the ones I list below--plus more:

- Light
- Low calories
- 100 calories
- Diet
- Promotes weight loss
- Zero calories
- Slimming

- Guilt-free
- Low fat
- Low carb
- Sugar free

The media, in conjunction with culture, has trained us to look for these words and phrases when it comes to losing weight, staying fit and trim, being attractive, and eating healthier. Furthermore, advertisements that promote "guilt-free" foods ironically perpetuate more guilt upon the person who decides to eat that extra rich piece of chocolate cake at midnight and then later pops some extra-buttered popcorn to snack on; let me be the one to tell you: IT IS OKAY TO DO THIS SOMETIMES! Of course, maybe it isn't the best idea to *always* eat the fun and rich foods, but what is life without these moments--especially after midnight?

Fad diets work for many people, but despite this fact I don't believe in any of these diets. I believe

that a person must find their own balance and discover a unique diet that works well for their body. We all have different bodies that function uniquely and have different needs; why subject ourselves to the status quo of a *generalized* diet? Instead of letting the media determine how you feel about yourself, how you look, and what you eat, how about *you* be the determinant of these matters from here on. Don't get caught up in the media trap.

Side Note: If you are looking to eat healthier, analyze and observe the ingredients in your food. Oftentimes, simply eradicating a lot of the superfluous and non-beneficial ingredients from your diet helps to get rid of cravings, excess fat, inches, moodiness, lethargy, and more!

So, You're A Foodie

Well, so am I--a proud one too. Maybe you're a fit foodie. Maybe you're an overweight foodie. Maybe you're a slim foodie. It doesn't matter what type of foodie you are as long as you know where you presently stand health-wise and where you want to stand in the long run. Food is not bad; food is extraordinary (in my eyes anyways). However, there is a difference between needing food, wanting food, enjoying food in a balanced fashion, and being dependent and attached to food; learn to distinguish between each of these.